DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 192 578 FL 011 713

AUTHOR Laverty, Grace E.
TITLE Report of Survey on Business Use of Foreign Language.
INSTITUTION Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 19p.; Research prepared through the Bureau of Research and Evaluation.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business; City Government; Employment Practices; Health Services; *Language Proficiency; *Personnel Policy; *Second Languages; State Surveys
IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

In 1978 a study was initiated to determine the use and importance of foreign language proficiency in Pennsylvania businesses. Two hundred eighty-four respondents represented the commercial, health, and municipal domains. Positive responses (indicating employment of personnel skilled in languages other than English) were received from 41% of businesses, 60% of health care facilities, and 79% of municipalities, thus from 43% of total respondents. The survey revealed the following trends: (1) 85% of positive responders have employees with foreign language proficiency; (2) fewer than 25% of employers include an item on language proficiency on employment applications, and fewer than 20% would consider such proficiency for promotion; (3) the most important language in all categories was Spanish, with Italian, German, and French appearing less than half as frequently (this discrepancy was less pronounced with business respondents); (4) change in client attitude brought about by foreign-language-skilled personnel seemed most important in the health field (52%); and (5) 62% of the businesses felt that expansion might increase their needs for language proficient employees. The responding organizations are listed in an appendix. Results are reported in tabular and graphic form. (JB)

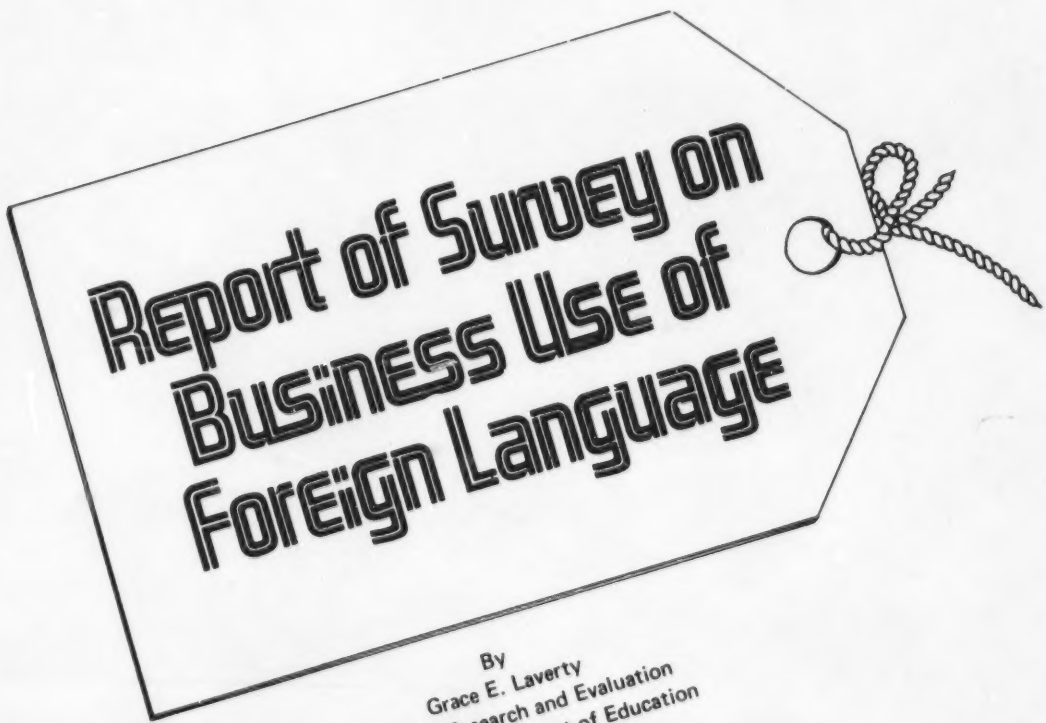
****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED192578

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Pennsylvania Dept. of Education
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

FL 011 713



By
Grace E. Laverty
Bureau of Research and Evaluation
Pennsylvania Department of Education

Business Use of Foreign Language

In 1978 the Division of Communications, Bureau of Curriculum Services initiated a study to determine the use and importance of foreign language proficiency in Pennsylvania businesses.

Procedures

A 15-question survey form was prepared and sent to commercial businesses, health care facilities and municipalities within Pennsylvania. Between 900 and 1000 survey forms were mailed out by the Division of Communications during the summer of 1978. Forms were completed and returned during the fall of 1978.

After assistance was requested from the Bureau of Research and Evaluation, the returned forms were sorted and keypunched, and the data were analyzed by computer.

Sample

In two conversations, Mrs. FANNETTA N. Gordon of the Division of Communications gave the following information about the sample selected to receive survey forms:

1. Commercial businesses in the international area, exporters and importers, selected from Pennsylvania Department of Commerce listings. Only business with an annual volume above $20,000, with 10 or more employees and engaged in business with countries on more than one continent outside the United States were selected.

2. Hospitals and nursing homes--all that were known or listed BY THE PENNSYLVANIA ~~in some unspecified source~~. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

3. Certain municipalities "known to have large non-English dominant populations."

Between 900 and 1000 surveys were distributed, and 284 responses were received for a response rate of about 30 percent.

Responses were received from 130 commercial businesses, 14 municipalities, and 139 hospitals and other health care facilities. (One response from a church mission organization was not included in the sample of 283.) These were divided into those who employ speakers of foreign languages and those who do not, and the major part of the analysis was conducted for the responses from the employers of foreign language speakers. There were a total of 124 positive responses included in the analysis: 53 commercial business firms, 11 municipalities, and 60 health care facilities.

Analysis

After sorting of positive and negative responses, the positive survey forms were prepared for computerized data processing. The frequency and percentage of positive answers for each item or item part were calculated.

Limitations

The generalizability of the findings in this study are limited to the specific categories of business included in the sample. Even of this limited sample, the majority of responders said they did not employ speakers of languages other than English.

Results - Negative Responders

Seventy-seven commercial businesses said they do not currently employ persons with skills in languages other than English. Some returned the form, others sent a letter explaining that the survey was not applicable to their businesses. Among the 77 were 16 business leaders who made further explanations or statements:

Spanish is or would be useful because we have Spanish-speaking workers.	4
The government should see that kids learn English and basic skills, not foreign languages.	3
Firm works in other countries (5,6,3,9,4 or 6 countries, import from 4, market to some) but use only English with no problems.	8
It would be useful in sales and engineering for translation, and we would give preference to foreign language proficient person in hiring.	1

The health care facilities had a different pattern of response. Twenty-five said yes, they do have some foreign language proficient employees, but these were counted as negative responders because they did not complete the form. All 25 said it was not a requirement for employment. Of these 25, 14 did say that if the occasion arises, those skills might be used in working with patients. One would provide training in Yiddish conversation skills. Among the 54 no responses were the following remarks:

Employment not based on language skills	30
Not applicable	6
No need for foreign language skills	20
No, but need more proficiency in English	3
No, but could use foreign language skills (if nurses and aides were available with them)	5

Among the 14 responding municipalities, three said no, they do not hire persons with foreign language skills. Most were careful to comment that language is not a hiring criterion, but that because of the ethnic groups within the municipality, they do have speakers of languages other than English. Eleven were included in the computer analysis of positive responses.

Results - Positive Responders

The results shown here will appear by item for three categories and a total. All percentages were based on the following numbers:

Commercial businesses	n = 53 (41% of total businesses)
Health care facilities	n = 60 (43% of total health care facilities)
Municipalities	n = 11 (79% of total municipalities)
	N = 124 (43% of sample)

In interpreting these findings, remember that they are based on only 43 percent of the respondents.

Item 1. In how many countries does your firm operate?

(This item was appropriate for commercial business only. Some reponses were only approximate.)

Mean number of countries = 16
Standard deviation = 23.46
Range was 90 (1 to 91 countries)

Item 2. Does your firm currently employ persons with skills in languages other than English?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	39	74
Health	56	93
Cities	10	91
Total	105	85

Item 3. If your answer to Number 2 is yes, check foreign language skills below that employees use in their work.

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
Understanding	34 (64)	52 (87)	7 (64)	93 (75)
Reading	34 (64)	24 (40)	5 (46)	63 (51)
Technical Comprehension	26 (49)	11 (18)	0 (0)	37 (30)
Speaking	35 (66)	53 (88)	7 (64)	95 (77)
Writing	32 (60)	22 (37)	5 (46)	59 (48)

(See attached graph)

Item 4. Does your firm's job application include an item concerning language proficiency?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	15	28.3
Health	11	18.3
Cities	3	27.3
Total	29	23.4

Item 5. Foreign language proficiency would be a positive consideration. (Check all appropriate)

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
a. employment	27 (51)	30 (50)	5 (46)	62 (50)
b. promotion	19 (36)	5 (8)	0 (0)	24 (19)
c. salary increase	6 (11)	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (7)

Item 6. Where do you get employees with foreign language proficiency?

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
Provide training	14 (26)	1 (2)	0 (0)	15 (12)
Recruit abroad	16 (30)	1 (2)	0 (0)	17 (14)

Item 7. Check languages most useful in your firm's operation.

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
Spanish	40 (76)	50 (83)	9 (82)	99 (80)
French	36 (68)	4 (7)		40 (32)
Korean	3 (6)	8 (13)		11 (9)
Efik	0 (0)	0 (0)		0 (0)
Japanese	12 (23)	1 (2)		13 (10)
Italian	19 (36)	21 (35)	3 (27)	43 (35)
Portuguese	10 (19)	1 (2)		11 (9)
Swahili	1 (2)	1 (2)		2 (2)
Arabic	3 (6)	3 (5)		6 (5)
Russian	1 (2)	4 (7)	1 (9)	6 (5)
Hebrew	1 (2)	3 (5)		4 (3)
Dutch	5 (9)	2 (3)		7 (6)
German	31 (58)	11 (18)		42 (34)
Chinese	3 (6)	3 (5)		6 (5)
Hindi	1 (2)	3 (5)		4 (3)
Other	3 (6)	29 (48)		32 (26)

(See attached graph)

Item 8. Check the employee foreign language proficiency most desired by your firm.

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
Conversational	34 (64)	47 (78)	8 (73)	89 (72)
Composition	10 (19)	2 (3)	0 (0)	12 (10)
Translation	31 (58)	29 (48)	4 (46)	65 (52)
Technical vocabulary	13 (24)	7 (12)	0 (0)	20 (16)

Item 9. If you use employees with foreign language skills, have you detected a difference in the attitude of your foreign clients since you began this practice?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	16	30
Health	31	52
Cities	3	27
Total	50	40

Item 10. Check the technical/professional career areas in your firm that would profit most if employees had foreign language skills.

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
Sales	41 (77)	0 (0)	0 (0)	41 (33)
Engineering	21 (40)	0 (0)	0 (0)	21 (17)
Accounting	6 (11)	1 (2)	0 (0)	7 (6)
Secretarial	12 (23)	7 (12)	2 (18)	21 (7)
Production	6 (11)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (5)
Clerical	4 (8)	11 (18)	3 (27)	18 (14)
Management	21 (40)	1 (2)	1 (9)	23 (18)
Other	4 (8)	*47 (78)	**5 (46)	56 (45)

*Mostly patient care
**Mainly police and fire persons

(See attached graph)

Item 11. Would you give hiring preference to applicant with foreign language proficiency?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	28	53
Health	33	55
Cities	4	36
Total	65	52

Item 12. If your firm does not currently have employees with foreign language skills, would you employ them if available? (Some responded "yes" who say they do have such employees.)

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	25	47
Health	27	45
Cities	4	36
Total	56	45

Item 13. If your firm's operation expanded, would the need for employees with skills in other languages increase?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	33	62
Health	14	23
Cities	0	0
Total	47	38

Item 14. Would a change in the focus of your business create demand for employees with foreign language proficiency?

	No. of "Yes"	Percentage
Business	24	45
Health	5	8
Cities	1	9
Total	30	24

Item 15. Would you be willing (on this subject) to:

	Number and (Percentage) of Checks			
	Business	Health	Cities	Total
a. discuss on media	10 (19)	6 (10)	0 (0)	16 (13)
b. speak to adults	11 (21)	6 (10)	1 (9)	18 (14)
c. speak to students	15 (28)	8 (13)	1 (9)	24 (19)
d. discuss with educators	26 (49)	17 (28)	3 (27)	46 (37)

(The Appendix lists responders who are willing to discuss this subject if asked. The letters a, b, c, d after the name show context(s) in which that responder is willing to act.)

Summary of Results

Although it is not always a condition of employment, 85 percent of the positive responders do currently have employees with proficiency in languages other than English. Speaking and understanding are the most desired skills (75 percent), reading and writing are next in importance (50 percent) and only about 30 percent of employers desire technical comprehension.

Fewer than a quarter of employers include an item on language proficiency on the application for employment, but half feel it would be a positive consideration in employment. However, fewer than 20 percent would consider it for promotion and only 7 percent in a salary increase. Overall only about one quarter of the respondents answered the item about where employees with foreign language proficiency are obtained. Among business respondents, however, 26 percent provide training and 30 percent recruit abroad.

The most important language over all categories is Spanish, with Italian, German and French appearing less than half as frequently. Among business respondents, however, French and German ranked close behind Spanish. The most desired skills were conversational and translation, with technical vocabulary and composition skills lagging far behind.

Change in client attitude with use of foreign language seemed most important in the health field (52 percent), and comments indicated this was vital in communicating with patients, especially in emergency situations and geriatric care. Overall about half of these respondents would give preference to an applicant with foreign language skills, all other things being equal. In the business category, sales was the career area in which foreign language proficiency was most desirable, with engineering and management second in importance. Sixty-two percent of the businesses felt that expansion might increase their needs for language proficient employes, and 45 percent felt a change of focus might also do it. The health and municipal respondants did not forsee much increase in their need for employees with foreign language skills.

Appendix

Responders willing to discuss this subject:

a. publicly on media
b. with adult groups
c. with student groups
d. with educators

Commercial Businesses

1. Allen Organ Company — c,d
   Steve Markowitz
   Manager, International Sales
   Macungie, PA 18062
   215-966-2200

2. Donery International, Inc. — a,b,c,d
   A. Michael Colameco, President
   P.O. Box 334
   Wynnewood, PA 19096

3. Advance Enterprises, Inc. — a,b,c,d
   John W. Sokolowski
   Assistant to the President
   419 Norway Street
   York, PA 17405
   717-843-7831

4. National Forge Company — c,d
   Peter J. Amberson
   Supervisor of Employee Relations
   Front Street
   Irvine, PA 16329
   814-563-7522, ext. 264

5. Amit International Trade Ltd. — a,b,c,d
   Annibale Cuozzo, President
   904 Chestnut Street
   Philadelphia, PA 19107
   215-923-8388

6. Mack Trucks, Inc. — a,b,c,d
   B. H. Contento, Supervisor
   Employment and Personnel Services
   P.O. Box M
   215-439-3820

7. Latrobe Steel Company — a,b,c,d
   Subsidiary of the Timken Company
   William S. Medve
   Manager of Personnel
   2626 S. Ligonier Street
   Latrobe, PA 15650
   412-537-7711

8. Hamilton Watch Co., Inc. — d
K. A. Bromer
Personnel Assistant
941 Wheatland Avenue
Lancaster, PA 17603
717-394-7161, ext. 158

9. FMC Corporation — d
Material Handling Equipment Division
J. W. Boyce, Division Manager
Homer City, PA 15748
412-479-8011

10. Certainteed Corporation — b,c,d
Elaine F. Hall, Expatriation Coordinator
P.O. Box 860
Valley Forge, PA 19480
215-687-5000

11. Carpenter Technology Corporation — a,b,c,d
John E. Newlin, Jr.
Vice-President International
P.O. Box 662
Reading, PA 19603
215-372-4511

12. Fischer & Porter Company — b,c,d
David J. Nessim
Senior Vice-President, International Operations
Corporate Headquarters
One Gibralter Plaza
Horsham, PA 19044
215-674-6621

13. Andrew S. McCreath & Son, Inc. — d
Fred A. Pennington, Sr., Chairman
P.O. Box 1453
Harrisburg, PA 17105
717-238-9331

14. Pittsburgh Plate Glass, Inc. — d
John N. McLaughlin
Manager, Human Resources Division
One Gateway Center
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-434-2067

15. VF Corporation — a,b,c,d
Jack Peltier
President of VF Corporation International
P.O. Box 1022
Reading, PA 19603
215-378-1151

16. Grocery Store Products Company — a,b,c,d
R. T. Walters
Manager of Personnel
Union & Adams Streets
West Chester, PA 19380
215-696-6300

17. Kellogg-American, Inc. — a,b,c,d
Jack Barrett
Financial Planner
565 Cedar Way
Oakmont, PA 15139
412-362-2100, ext. 602

18. Kocks Pittsburgh Corporation — d
Wolfgang K. Rihmland, President
Four Gateway Center
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-261-1194

19. Rogatin International, Inc. — a,c,d
Philip F. Rogatin, President
2011 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-568-1464

20. Dravo Corporation — c,d
Fred W. Herman
Personnel Development Specialist
One Oliver Plaza
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412-566-3903

21. Inland Marine — d
Robert Slaff, President
79 E. Jackson Street
Wilkes Barre, PA 18701
717-822-7185

22. KEM Plastic Playing Cards, Inc. — d
John Bjacek, Vice-President
1015 N. Main AVenue
Scranton, PA 18508
717-343-4783

23. Westinghouse Electric Corporation — a,b,c,d
Ralph H. Davis, Consultant
Key Personnel Services Department
Westinghouse Building
11 Stanwix St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15230
412-255-3626

24. Hancock-Gross — d
Allen Dubin
Director of Personnel
401 North 21st Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
215-567-4000

25. A. Hirsh, Inc. — d
Erwin Hirsh, President
Coral & Hagert Streets
Philadelphia, PA 19125
215-425-4646

Health Facilities

1. Temple University Hospital and Medical School — b,c,d
Saul Pachman
Employment Manager
3401 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
215-221-3999

2. Holy Spirit Hospital — a,b,c,d
Raymond P. Barth
Director of Personnel
North 21st Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011
717-761-0202, ext. 305

3. Center City Hospital — d
Harry Shubin, M.D.
Medical Director/Administrator
1829 Pine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-893-1000

4. St. Luke's Hospital — a,b,c,d
Alan M. Fermier
Personnel Assistant
Ostrum Street
Bethlehem, PA 18000
215-691-4091

5. Pennsylvania Department of Health — a,d
Eastern Division
John L. Breisch
Administrative Officer
401 Buttonwood Street
West Reading, PA 19611
215-378-4345

6.	Annie M. Warner Hospital William D. Myers Acting Administrator Gettysburg, PA 17325 717-334-2121, ext. 111	a,b,c,d
7.	Albert Einstein Medical Center William J. Schwabe Director of Personnel Philadelphia, PA 19141 215-329-0700, ext. 562	c
8.	St. Christopher's Hospital for Children John Drenning Assistant Vice-President, Personnel 2600 North Lawrence Street Philadelphia, PA 19133 215-427-5344	d
9.	Sacred Heart Hospital Ginnie Benedict Personnel Assistant 421 Chew Street Allentown, PA 18101 215-821-3395	d
10.	Lancaster Osteopathic Hospital David Snyder Director of Personnel 1175 Clark Street 717-397-3711, ext. 2459-0	a,b,c,d
11.	State Health Department Gladys Parks, R.N. Public Health Director 103 W. Middle Street Chambersburg, PA 17201	d
12.	Saint Joseph Hospital Michael Pregmon, Personnel Box 316 Reading, PA 19603 215-376-4901	d
13.	Episcopal Hospital Richard Handschumacher Assistant Director, Employee Relations Front Street & Lehigh Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19125 215-427-7183	d

14. The Rehab Hospital — d
Lou Haines
Director of Vital Services
4950 Wilson Lane
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
717-697-8211

15. Barnes-Kasson County Hospital — d
Sara C. Iveson
Associate Director
400 Turnpike Street
Susquehanna, PA 18847
717-853-3135

16. Rolling Hill Hospital — a,b,c,d
Iris C. Sopolsky
Director of Personnel
60 East Township Line Road
Elkins Park, PA 19117
215-663-6151

17. Phoebe-Devitt Home — d
John M. Herbster
Director, Training and Personnel
1925 Turner Street
Allentown, PA 18104
215-435-9037

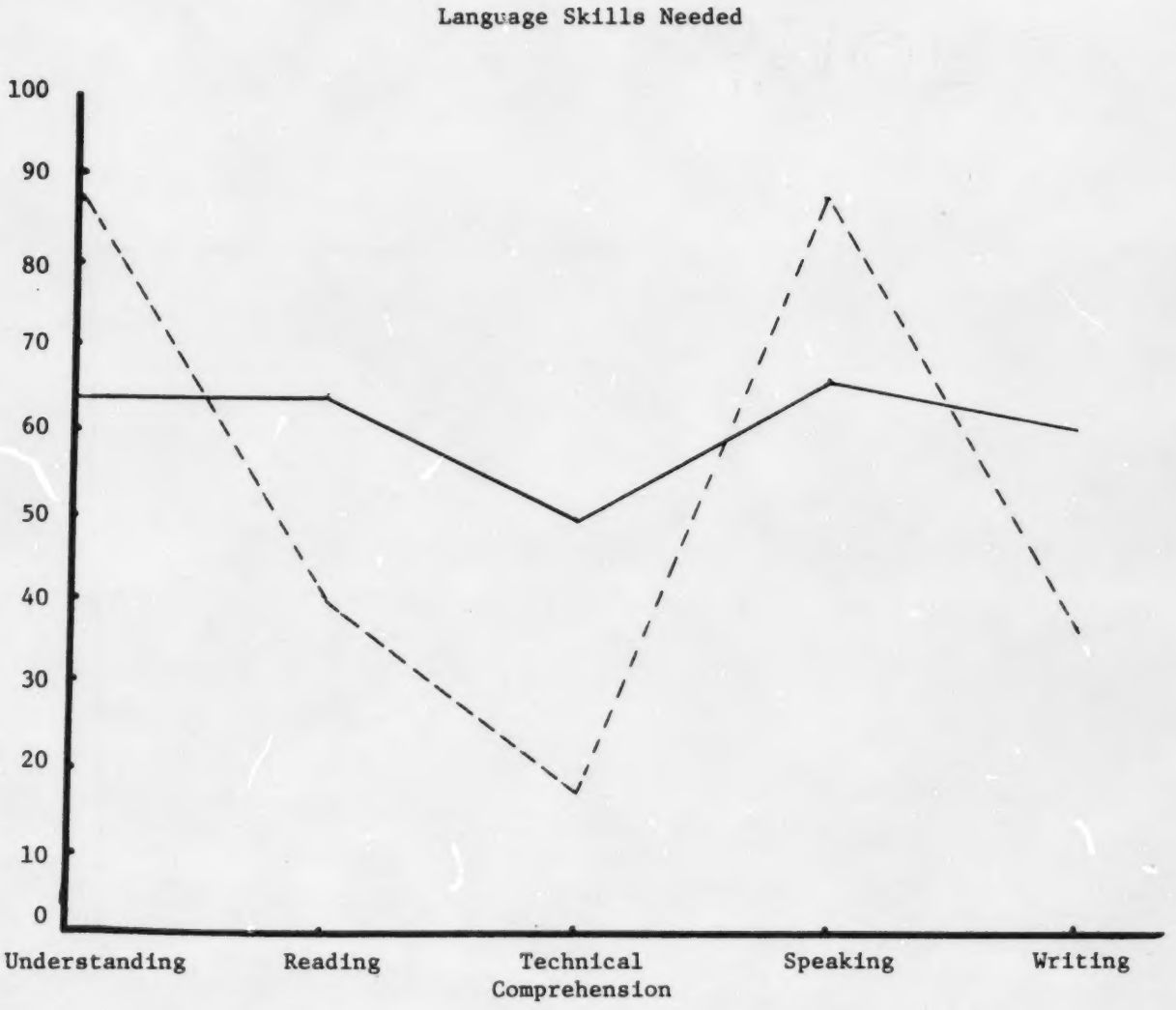
18. Delaware County Memorial Hospital — c,d
Herbert O. Larson, Jr.
Personnel Director
Lansdowne & Keystone Avenues
Drexel Hill, PA 19026
215-CL 9-3800, ext. 310

Municipalities

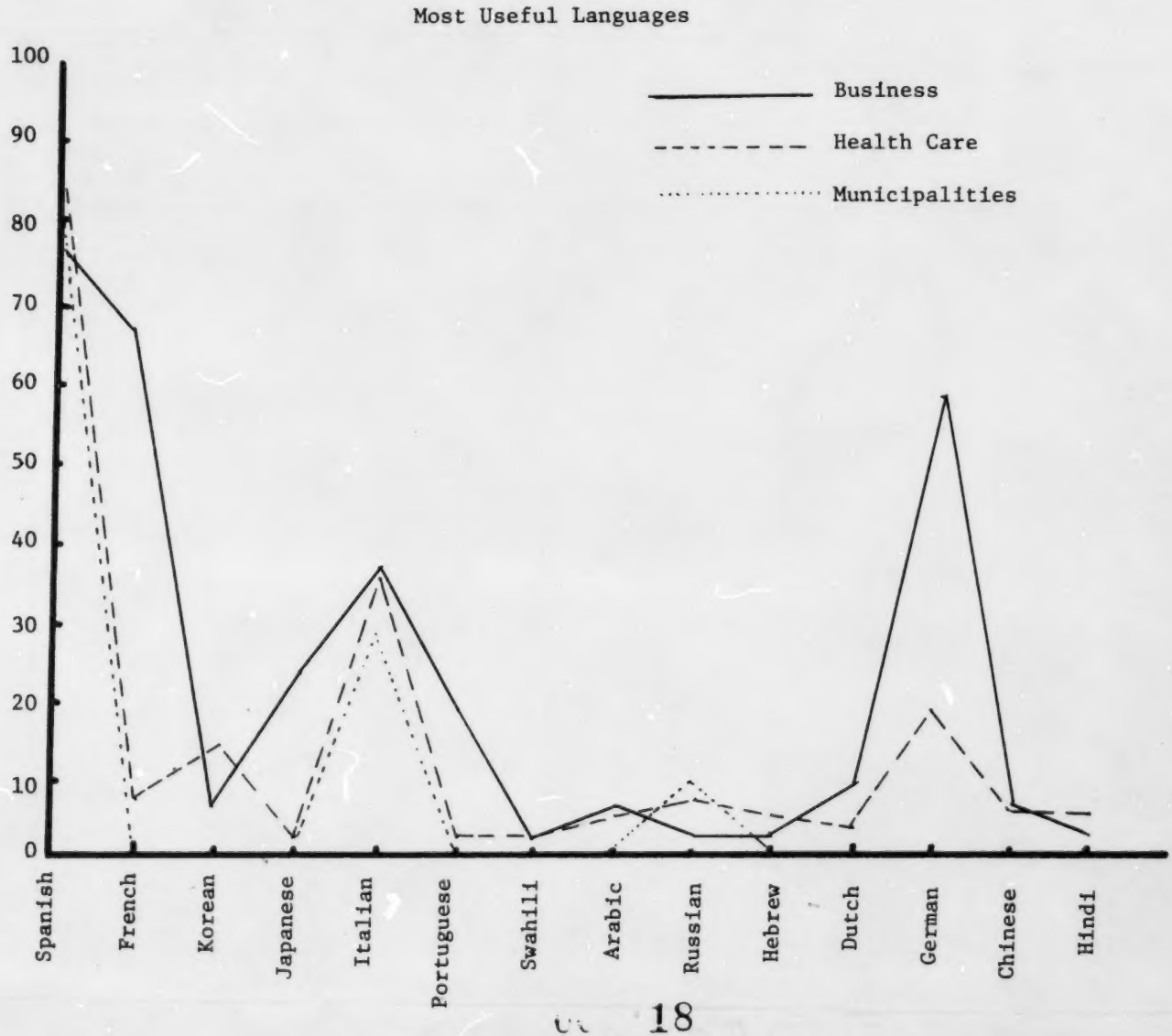
1. Johnstown Police Department — d
Officer James C. Miller
Training and Education
111 Johns Street
Johnstown, PA 15901
814-539-8761, ext. 31

2. City of Lebanon — d
   Rose Marie Swanger
   City Clerk
   400 South Eighth Street
   Lebanon, PA 17042
   717-272-3006

3. Borough of West Chester — b,c,d
   Robert J. Shaw
   Borough Manager
   Gay & Adams Streets
   West Chester, PA 19380
   215-692-7574

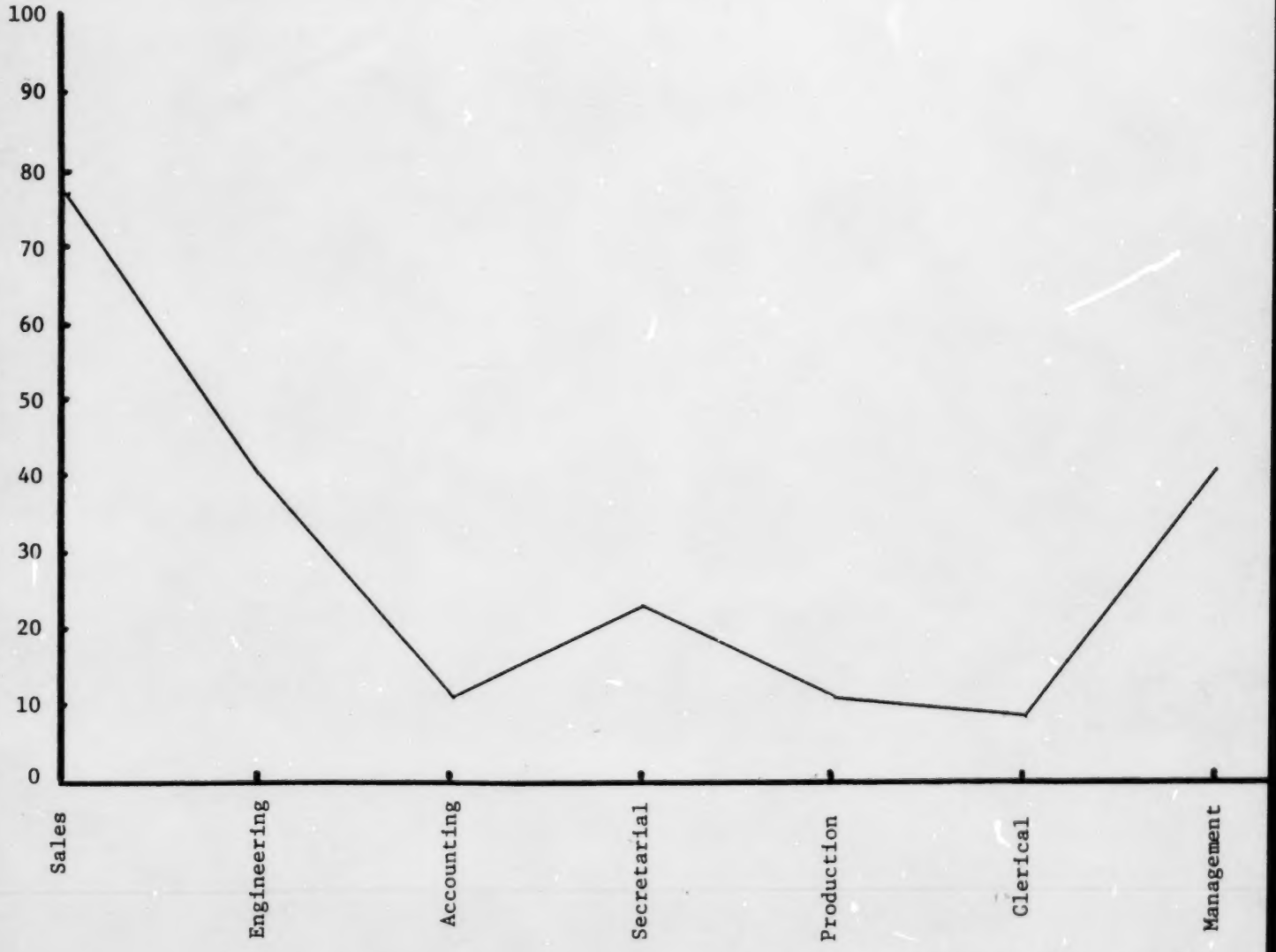


Business Use of Foreign Language Survey
Bureau of Curriculum Services, PDE, 1978



Business Use of Foreign Language Survey
Bureau of Curriculum Services, PDE, 1978

Areas in Business Profiting Most
by Foreign Language Skills



Business Use of Foreign Language Survey
Bureau of Curriculum Services, PDE, 1978